THE

ANTI-CALVINIST;

or two plain discourses on

REDEMPTION & FAITH.

BY

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"Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness, is righteous." 1 John, iii, 7.

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PREFACE.

THESE few pages are publiſhed, principally, with a view to provide thoſe, who have not leiſure to peruſe, money to purchaſe or power to comprehend larger and more learned works on the ſame ſubject, with an antidote againſt that miſchievous ſuperſtition, which has lately made a conſiderable progreſs in this country; and which, if it do not meet with a ſeaſonable check, will undoubtedly terminate, not only in the ruin of the church-eſtabliſhment, but in making Chriſtianity itſelf an inſtrument for the propagation of vice and the diffuſion of miſery. Either from ſtubborn ignorance or perfidious wickedneſs, many of thoſe who falſely aſſume the title of Evangelical preachers, (but who better deſerve the name of Evangelical jugglers,) are, at this moment, buſily employed in ſapping the ſtrong foundations of morality; for, ſtrange as it may ſeem, the great drift of their preaching is to prove, that God hath im-

planted in man an irreſiſtible propenſity to do evil, and deſignedly rendered him incapable of doing good; and that, as, by the fall of Adam, he became a ſinner, liable to damnation, without the conſent of his will, ſo, by the death of Chriſt, he is made righteous, without the co-operation of his obedience. They decry the importance and invalidate the neceſſity of *a loyal ſubmiſſion to the moral government of the Goſpel;* and they conjure up the glowing viſion of imputed righteouſneſs, in order to lay the ghaſtly ſpectre of hereditary corruption. Of this horde of fanatics ſome maintain, without any limitation or reſerve, the abſolute decrees of predeſtination, reprobation and election; while others pretend to qualify this doctrine, by certain clauſes of ſaving faith and all-regenerating grace. But, on theſe topics, they only utter a ſenſeleſs jargon; for they make faith, not the fruit of enquiry, but the immediate gift of inſpiration; and they conſider grace, not as a help to the practice of holineſs, but a ſubſtitute for it. Thus the two great claſſes into which theſe fanatics are divided, differ little in the principle of their doctrine, and nothing in the miſchief of it's tendency. The preſent diverſity of opinions among Chriſtians, on certain dark and

inexplicable myſteries, is indeed of little importance, *as long as thoſe opinions are not made ſubſervient to the deſtruction of active goodneſs;* but when doctrines are circulated with uncommon induſtry and inculcated with uncommon zeal, which tend to deter even good men from the practice of virtue, by repreſenting it as a vain and hopeleſs toil, and which powerfully impel bad men on in the career of wickedneſs, by holding out the proſpect of impunity, I think that it becomes me, not more as a miniſter of the church of England, than as a member of the univerſal church of Chriſt, to endeavour, along with other more able writers, to ſtem this dangerous deluſion; a deluſion which has, in many places, ſeized, like an epidemic madneſs, the lower claſſes of the community; where fanaticiſm from ignorance, on the one ſide, and credulity on the other, is moſt to be dreaded; where it may be moſt eaſily propagated, and where it is moſt difficult to be repreſſed.

Had this anti-chriſtian hereſy tainted only a few individuals, I ſhould have contemplated it, in ſilence, with pity or with ſcorn; but when I behold it preying on the credulity of thouſands, blinding the eye of the underſtanding, and harden-

ing the affections of the heart, I conſider ſilence to be guilt, and contempt to be inhumanity. In this diſaſtrous and critical period of the Chriſtian church, when fanaticiſm, whoſe abſurdity is always ſurpaſſed by it's malignity, is waging a more deſtructive war againſt religion than even infidelity itſelf, it ſeriouſly behoves all the friends to genuine and reaſonable Chriſtianity to unite their efforts, in order to retrieve the ſcandal of the croſs, and to prevent the ſalubrious doctrine of the holy Jeſus from being changed into a deadly poiſon.

In a variety of diſcourſes, which the duties of my profeſſion have led me to write, and which I have endeavoured to write in a ſtyle, not above the reach of the moſt ordinary capacity, I have taken ſome pains to counteract the progreſs of infidelity on the one hand, and of fanaticiſm on the other. I may, perhaps, at ſome future period, publiſh a volume or two of theſe diſcourſes in a cheap form, ſo as to be acceſſible to thoſe to whom they may be moſt uſeful.

Pure, ſincere, rational, moral and benevolent Chriſtianity I love more than any thing elſe. It is the conſtant object of my thoughts; and it has been my ſolace in many hours when conſolation from

any other ſource would have been ſought in vain. But I diſlike cant, and all the gangrened ſperm and abortions of hypocriſy, to whatever purpoſe they may be applied; and I diſlike them moſt of all when they are employed to tarniſh the divine beauty of religion. Religious cant is, of all the objects of deteſtation, the moſt deteſtable: and I am ſorry to have occaſion to remark, that a miſerable, whining, driveling cant, about the mere ſhadows, the forms, and as it were excreſcences of religion, to the neglect of it's weightier matters, and to the deſtruction of the rationality, the dignity and magnanimity of it's character, hath been too much practiſed by ſeveral writers of the preſent day, from whom better things might have been expected. The fumes of fanaticiſm ſeem to have been exhaled and to be exhaling from thoſe in low to thoſe in high places; from the many in that humble region where ignorance dwells and credulity prevails, to ſome few in the loftier conditions of life, whoſe minds enlightened by knowledge, and whoſe hearts expanded by benevolence, ought to have been inacceſſible to the cold unſocial ſpirit of that fanatic fiend, whoſe very touch hardens the feelings, and prevents the right uſe of the underſtanding.—Perhaps it would not

be eaſy to ſhow a more ſtriking contraſt than is to be found between the character of Chriſt, and that of thoſe perſons of the preſent day who lay claim to the high gift of inſpiration.—Contraſt *his* ſmiling look with *their* funereal aſpect, *his* winning hilarity with *their* repulſive moroſeneſs, the ſuavity of *his* manner marked with a thouſand endearing attractions, with the acrimonious ſeverity of *theirs*, made more hideous and loathſome by deſponding ſhrugs, doleful ſighs and hollow-ſounding groans. Contraſt the perſpicuity of *his* inſtructions, with the impenetrable darkneſs of *their* diſcourſes,—the affectionate, gentle ſtream of *his* perſuaſions, with the roaring torrent of *their* fierce and mercileſs imprecations,—the ſerene but animated flame of *his* benevolence, with the ſcorching fire of *their* intolerance. The picture might be ſtretched ſtill wider on the canvaſs; but I truſt that it has been drawn with ſufficient diſcrimination to ſhow, that *The* Jeſus of real Evangelical ſimplicity is very different from *that* Jeſus which excites the turbid raptures of Calviniſtic adoration.

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1 JOHN ii, 2

He is the propitiation for our ſins; and not for our's only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world.

CHRISTIANS,

SINCE ſome of our brethren extol and others depreciate, beyond the authority of ſcripture, the mediatorial ſacrifice of our great redeemer, you will, I truſt, indulge me with a patient hearing, while I briefly and plainly ſet before you, the extent and the nature of our redemption. As Chriſtians, it is requiſite that we ſhould have juſt and diſtinct notions on this important ſubject; that our imaginations may not be loſt in the depths of dark myſteries, but, that we may know what the precious bloodſhedding of our Lord hath done for us, and what it hath left for us to do.

Some perſons, whoſe minds have been tinctured by fanaticiſm and whoſe hearts have been hardened by ſelfiſhneſs, have been too prone to limit the benefits of our ſaviours paſſion within the pale of their own ſect, and to appropriate it to a few choſen individuals, whom, in the deluſion of vanity or the blindneſs of ſuperſtition, they have called *the elect.* — But, far be it from me, ſo to explain the great myſtery of redemption; or, with impious preſumption, to confine it's bleſſings within the breaſts of any individuals of any church, of any faith, or nation. For it is the certain and expreſs doctrine of ſcripture that Chriſt died not for a few but for many; not for one

but for all; not for any particular people or church or nation, but "for the whole world." St. Paul says expressly (2 Cor. c. v, v. 15,) that "he died for all;" and that "there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, *who gave himself a ransom for all.* 1 Tim. c. 11, v. 5, 6. St. John says (1 Ep. c. 11, v. 1, 2.) "If any man sin" (meaning not any particular individual of any particular church or tenets, but any individual of the whole human race) "we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." Such are St. John's notions of the great mystery of redemption; and, certainly, no person of later times can pretend to understand it better than that disciple, whom Jesus loved; — that disciple who was more especially favoured with divine communications. If, therefore, St. John have expressly declared that the benefits of the redemption are universal, I should be a blasphemer if I represented them as partial; if he have asserted that they are extended over the whole surface of the earth, and embrace the whole family of mankind, I should be totally unworthy to expound the gospel, if I circumscribed them within the narrow limits of any church, any people or any religion in the world. Our Lord is called in several places (see 1 John c. 4, v. 14. Evang. c. 4, v. 42,) the Saviour of the world; — a name which would not have been attributed to him, if the benefits of his passion were specially devoted only to a few chosen individuals and excluded from all the rest of mankind.

When it is ſaid in the ſcripture that Chriſt died "for all" or for "the whole world," we are not to underſtand theſe words as importing that his death, hath abſolutely and unconditionally procured the pardon of ſinners, but only that it hath procured for them a conditional pardon under a new covenant of ſalvation. Chriſt died abſolutely for none; but, *conditionally, for all mankind.* His blood was ſhed to render ſinners acceptable to God, and heirs of eternal bleſſedneſs on the conditions of their faith, repentance and ſincere obedience. Theſe are the terms of ſalvation propoſed in the goſpel; and, to all, who obſerve them the, blood of the atonement will prove the means of eternal bleſſedness. Before the coming of Chriſt all men were under the ſentence of condemnation; a condemnation to death not temporal but eternal. Adam was born immortal or capable of living for ever without either a ſuſpenſion or extinction of exiſtence, but, by his diſobedience, he became ſubject to mortality and all it's ills. His deſcendants were conſequently born mortal; and doomed after a ſhort life, to return to the duſt from which they were taken.—This ſentence of mortality or condemnation which was paſſed on all, was repealed by the death of Chriſt, whoſe blood was the ſeal of a new and better covenant, propoſing to reſtore fallen man to the privileges of immortality which he had loſt by the tranſgreſſion of Adam, on the condition of his ſincere obedience to the laws which are promulgated in the goſpel. Thus the pardon which Chriſt hath obtained for all mankind is not abſolute but conditional. It partakes of the nature of a covenant in

which great and glorious advantages are ſtipulated by one party, or by God through Chriſt, on the condition of certain ſervices to be performed, or certain laws to be obſerved by the other party, or by mankind.

The nature of the covenant, which God through Chriſt, hath, in compaſſion to our infirmities, condeſcended to enter into with us, may perhaps be more diſtinctly apprehended by the following illuſtration. Suppoſe that any prince ſhould, through the mediation of his ſon, promiſe pardon to his rebellious ſubjects, on the condition that they confeſſed their guilt and returned to their obedience. Here you will obſerve that this pardon would not be abſolute but conditional; and the conditions would be a confeſſion of guilt and a return to obedience. The performance of the conditions therefore would be the only pledge of the pardon; and it would not avail thoſe who neglected to perform them.—In the ſame manner, Chriſt, by his death, hath prevailed on his father to grant to mankind a diſpenſation of mercy, promiſſing pardon on the conditions of their faith, their repentance and their obedience, or continuance in well-doing.—But, as this pardon is conditional, it certainly belongs to none but thoſe who perform the conditions.

We are to remember what many among us are, I fear too prone to forget, that Chriſt did not appear on earth merely in the character of a redeemer or deliverer from puniſhment, but as a lawgiver and a king promulgating

laws which he hath ſolemnly called on us to obey,—and threatening the diſobedient with deſtruction. As a redeemer, he hath paid our ranſom from the grave; or hath prevented that total extinction of our being, which otherwiſe awaited all men at the cloſe of this mortal life; but, as a king, he will not confer eternal bleſſedneſs on any, but thoſe who obſerve the ſtatutes of his kingdom. As a redeemer, he hath procured our deliverance from death; but he hath not wrought our unconditional deliverance from treſpaſſes and ſins. His righteouſneſs is not imputed to us; but he hath told us to follow his ſteps, and to endeavour to work out our own ſalvation. And he hath left us rules and laws for our direction in this important work; and hath, moreover, promiſed helps to aſſiſt us in the execution. *John* c. xv. v. 7—10, *James* c. iv, v. 8, *Luke* c. xi, v. 9—13. —The goſpel of Chriſt is, from beginning to end, nothing more than a rule of life; teaching us how to live ſo as to pleaſe God and to be worthy of immortality; and, at the ſame time, denouncing vengeance againſt the tranſgreſſor. Thoſe who read the diſcourſes of Chriſt, and particularly his glorious ſermon on the mount, cannot doubt but that the goſpel was intended as a rule of life, and that it was deſigned to improve our affections and our conduct; to make us meek, kind and benevolent, true, upright and devout; in ſhort, to teach us how to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world. This was the end of Chriſt's preaching; and we cannot imagine that he would ſo ſtrenuouſly have inſiſted on the neceſſity of the performance of all thoſe ſocial duties which may be

ſummed up in the general name of moral goodneſs, if they had been unneceſſary to our ſalvation. And if Chriſt's righteouſneſs were, as ſome fondly dream, actually imputed to us, or if his redemption had delivered us from the penalty of ſin, without the performance of any good works on our part, then his numerous exhortations to moral goodneſs, and his ſolemn injunctions to us to keep the commandments would have been vain and uſeleſs. For, why ſhould he have propoſed laws for our obedience, if he had known that ſuch obedience were unneceſſary; or if his celeſtial virtues were imputed to us for righteouſneſs?—If any other perſon pay my debts for me, he certainly releaſes me from the obligation. Or if any individual can be juſt for me, he takes upon himſelf the penalty of my injuſtice. If Chriſt have ſatisfied, by the virtue of his ſufferings on the croſs, all our moral obligations, if his obedience have ſuperſeded their neceſſity, then they are no longer neceſſary on our parts. If he, as our redeemer, have transferred his righteouſneſs to us, then we may ſin at our pleaſure. For where can be the neceſſity of taking the pains to acquire habits of righteouſneſs ourſelves, if another have been righteous in our ſtead? Thus you ſee, into what flagrant enormities, into what crimes and impieties we might eaſily be led, if we once adopted the notion—that Chriſt's righteouſneſs is imputed to us, or that the effuſion of his blood upon the croſs hath annulled the neceſſity of moral obſervances.

But, that Chriſt's righteouſneſs is not imputed to us,

and that his death upon the croſs hath not invalidated the importance or ſuperſeded the practice of a ſingle moral duty, we may learn from this, that we ſhall be judged at the laſt day according to our works. He hath accordingly told us, to let our righteouſneſs exceed that of the Scribes and Phariſees, to bring forth good fruit, "to do to others as we would they ſhould do to us," and not to to think to be ſaved by hollow profeſſions or a fallacious guiſe of ſanctity, but by *doing the will* of our heavenly father,—all which exhortations would have been idle and ſuperfluous, if he had fully ſatisfied the divine juſtice, if his blameleſs holineſs were made our's, and he had redeemed us not only from the ſting of death but from the obligations of morality. But all Chriſt's inſtructions, particularly his ſermon on the mount, which contains a ſummary of every thing which it is neceſſary for us to believe or to practiſe in order to be happy in an after life, ſtrongly inculcate the neceſſity of a ſtrict obedience to the moral law. They tell us to be humble, meek, benevolent, pure, ſincere, faithful and devout, to perform every duty that we owe to God or to man. Thus then it is plain, that moral obedience, or the performance of moral duties, is required of all men, and *more particularly of Chriſtians*. For Chriſtians are ſo far from being exonerated from the obligations of morality, that they are required to adhere to thoſe obligations with extraordinary earneſtneſs. They are deſired not to be weary in well-doing; they are deſired to let men ſee their good works, that unbelievers may be the more inclined to embrace a religion which makes men holy, and

to glorify the God of the Chriſtians. And we are to obſerve, that, whenever our Saviour mentions the terms on which he will paſs ſentence upon us all at the laſt day, he uniformly makes our ſalvation to depend *on our well doing*. He ſays expreſsly, that, "when the ſon of man ſhall come in the glory of his father, with his angels, then ſhall he reward every man according to his works." *Matt.* c. xvi, v. 27. He declares, in language the moſt plain and in a manner the moſt authoritative, that our portion of future happineſs will be according to our degree of moral goodneſs. He will "reward us according to our works,"—that is, the more we have perſevered in well doing, the more holy our lives have been, the higher ſtation we ſhall occupy in heaven. For we are to be rewarded according to our works, or in a juſt ratio to our progreſs in moral goodneſs.

Such is the expreſs declaration of our Saviour himſelf who never talks of any thing like imputed righteouſneſs, or of his righteouſneſs being aſcribed to us as our own; but who hath required his followers to be righteous in their own perſons, and to aſpire to the higheſt heights of moral perfection. Chriſtians are to ſtrive to "be perfect as their father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. v. 48.—Thoſe perſons therefore who imagine that their redeemer hath done all for them and left them nothing to do, but only to live as they pleaſe, and to expect juſtification upon eaſier conditions than thoſe of good works, will find themſelves, miſerably and fatally deluded, when the ſon of man ſhall again appear coming in the clouds of heaven; when,

the books ſhall be opened and judgement ſhall be adminiſtered according unto righteouſneſs.

How falſe, how irrational and how unſcriptural are thoſe notions, then, which repreſent our redeemer not only as our deliverer from the grave, but from the neceſſity of moral virtue!!! Were, indeed, this the nature of our redemption it would have been the greatest miſchief that could have befallen us. It would have made the ſon of God the patron and inſtigator of injuſtice and every crime; and it would finally have ended in baniſhing the beauty of civilization from the regions of mankind. For, what is it, O Chriſtians, that connects man with man, what is it that ſtrengthens and endears our intercourſe with each other, what is it in fact that holds ſociety together but the reciprocal and unchangeable obligations of truth, of juſtice and humanity? Were theſe moral obligations annihilated and were men taught that they might be eternally happy without the practice of them, all the bands of ſociety and government would be rent aſunder, and Chriſtianity would be converted into the greateſt curſe, that ever afflicted the world. — But, thanks be to God, Chriſtianity neither authoriſes nor ſupports any ſuch concluſions! Chriſtianity calls on us to be ſober and righteous; to practice ſelf-denial towards ourſelves, truth, integrity and humanity towards our neighbour. — Chriſtianity tells us to be pure and kind in heart, to be true to our promiſes, faithful to our engagements, and above all to have fervent love, one towards another. — Theſe are the doc-

trines, theſe the inſtructions of pure, genuine, unadulterated, Chriſtianity;—not the Chriſtianity which fanatics teach, or which ignorant and wicked men teach, but that Chriſtianity, which Chriſt himſelf both taught and practiſed. Though Chriſt both practiſed, taught and enjoined the pureſt morality, and though we are deſired to "be holy, as he which hath called us is holy," (1 Pet. c. i, v. xv,) yet there are many perſons, either through "pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs," 2 Theſſ. c. ii, v. xii, or wrought on by "ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lie," 2 Theſſ. c. ii, v. ii, who pretend that the ſin of Adam hath ſo thoroughly tainted and ſo radically depraved human nature, that man is from his birth addicted to wickedneſs, and incapable of goodneſs.—But the ſcriptures, when they are truly expounded, never teach, and our Saviour himſelf, in all his diſcourſes, never publiſhed this loathſome and pernicious doctrine. The ſin of Adam did not vitiate the nature of mankind. The puniſhment inflicted on Adam for his tranſgreſſion was death, and temporal miſery. His poſterity therefore are born to mortality and to ſuffering; but they are not born either in guilt or in wickedneſs. They are not born diſpoſed to evil and indiſpoſed to good. They are born innocent; and this was certainly the opinion of our Saviour, or he would not otherwiſe have declared of little children, that of ſuch is the kingdom of God. He would not have ſaid this, if they had been born in guilt and wickedneſs; for guilt and wickedneſs can have no admiſſion into heaven. Little children are born innocent, and ripe for heaven; and the fall cannot conſequently

have ſo vitiated the nature of man, as to have communicated to it an unnatural propenſity to moral evil, and an utter loathing of moral good. The nature of man is that of a rational being, capable of diſtinguiſhing between good and evil. The greateſt good is moral good, and the greateſt evil moral evil. Moral good is the perfection of man's nature, and the conſummation of his happineſs; moral evil is the degradation of man's nature, and the conſummation of his miſery. That God hath not given us reaſon to diſcern good from evil, the moſt rigid Calviniſt will find it more eaſy to aſſert than to prove; and if God have given us the faculty to diſtinguiſh, he hath not certainly denied the power to chooſe between them, or the former faculty would be uſeleſs, and God gives nothing in vain. If man have the power to diſcriminate and the liberty to chooſe between good and evil, he muſt be a free agent; and he conſequently does poſſeſs a capacity either to violate or to perform the ſeveral duties required of him in the goſpel as the conditions of ſalvation. And of this we may be ſure, that Chriſt, whoſe yoke is eaſy and whoſe burthen is light, would never have commanded the performance of theſe conditions, if he had known it impoſſible; and impoſſible it would have been, if man were born corrupt and depraved, and, by the conſtitution of his nature, greedy of corruption and depravity. But Chriſt hath not impoſed on us any burthens greater than we are able to bear. He hath not told us, as the mercileſs tyrant did the Iſraelites, to make bricks without ſtraw. He hath not propoſed a law for the regulation of our conduct,

which he knew that a previous ſentence of the Almighty had determined us to diſobey.

No phyſician, in his ſenſes, would order his patient to walk ten miles for the benefit of his health, if he knew him too feeble to riſe from his couch, or too lame to ſet his feet to the ground, — And, can we ſuppoſe that Chriſt the bleſſed phyſician who "bore our griefs and carried our ſorrows," would be guilty of ſuch a palpable abſurdity and ſuch diabolical injuſtice? — He never told the blind to ſee, the deaf to hear, or the cripple to walk, till he had cured their infirmity and reſtored the right uſe of their ſenſes and their limbs.—And can we ſuppoſe that he would have enjoined us, on the pain of damnation, to repent and to do works meet for repentance, if he had known us incapable of well-doing, and made by the will of his heavenly father irreſiſtibly prone to all manner of iniquity? No, let us not indulge ſuch falſe ſentiments of the founder of our religion! He hath impoſed no ſervices upon us which we are not able to perform; and as he hath, in the plaineſt and the ſtrongeſt language, and, under the ſevereſt penalties, enjoined all thoſe great moral duties, which we owe to ourſelves and to each other, it is clear beyond a doubt, firſt that they are practicable, and next that their practice is eſſential to ſalvation.

I ſhall now briefly conſider what influence the blood of the atonement is likely to have on the future deſtiny of thoſe who never heard of Chriſtianity; for as the

benefits of Chriſt's paſſion are extended to the whole world, they concern every nation and every people under heaven. – At the laſt day, Chriſt will ſummon all mankind into judgment. Now we may be certain that the judgment of God will be, as St. Paul ſays, "according to truth," that it will be "a righteous judgment," when every man will receive according to his deeds; and we may reſt aſſured, that God will judge a man according to what he hath, not according to what he hath not. Thoſe therefore to whom the goſpel has not been preached, on whom it's light has never ſhined, will not certainly be judged according to the rules or conditions of a diſpenſation of which they never heard; but will be judged according to the law which they had, according as their lives and conduct have been agreeable or adverſe to the light of their conſcience, and to the ſenſe of right and wrong which they did poſſeſs. Their degree of moral knowledge will form the ſtandard of their probation, and the equitable rule according to which they will be puniſhed or rewarded. This is clearly intimated in ſeveral parts of ſcripture, (*Luke* c. xii, v. 47, 48. *James* c. iv, v. 17. *Acts* c. x, v. 35. *Romans* c. xi, v. 6 –11.) and is conformable to juſtice and right reaſon. If then the heathen will be judged according to the opportunities of knowledge which they had, the uſe which they made of them, and the faculty they poſſeſſed of judging between good and evil, how unreaſonable is it to expect that Chriſtians will be judged by a different or leſs equitable rule! If Chriſtians have ten talents, while the Heathen have only one, they have more

to turn to account, but they have more to account for; and, great will be their misery, if they do not make a wise use of the glorious opportunities of knowledge and motives to righteousness which they enjoy above the rest of mankind. Of Christians it will be required, at the last day, that they have been "a chosen generation, an holy nation, a peculiar people, and that they have shewed forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 *Peter* c. xi, v. 9. Instead, therefore, of forging vain excuses to justify their depravity or palliate their corruptions, Christians, knowing that "he only that doeth righteousness is righteous," (*John* 1 *Ep.* c. ix, v. 7,) ought to be "prepared unto every good work;" striving, with unwearied diligence, to imitate their divine master in all the glorious perfections of his character, till his likeness is imprinted on their affections, and his spirit is infused into their hearts.

HEBREWS xi, 1.

Faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen.

CHRISTIANS,

OUR faith ought to be a living teſtimony to the truth of the things we believe. It ought, in ſome meaſure, to certify the reality of that which we hope for, and the exiſtence of that which we do not ſee.

As it is abſurd to ſuppoſe that an Atheiſt, or a man who really believes that there is no God, will worſhip him, give him thanks, and ſtrive to do that which is pleaſing in his ſight, ſo it is equally abſurd to ſuppoſe that a Deiſt, or a man who deems Chriſtianity an idle fiction, will, in his conduct, regard it's precepts, or practiſe the Chriſtian virtues from Chriſtian motives.—Before we can draw nigh to God, we muſt believe that he is; and, before we can have hope in Chriſt, we muſt rely on the truth of his miſſion, and in the divine original of his doctrine. We cannot build a ſuperſtructure of righteouſneſs, without firſt laying a ſolid ground-work of faith. By faith I mean a ſincere and genuine aſſent to the truth of the religion of Jeſus,—an aſſent ariſing from the calm conviction of the underſtanding, blended with the warm perſuaſion of the heart; and which will inevitably lead, thoſe who poſſeſs

it, to work righteouſneſs, and to do the will of God as made known by revelation.— Without ſuch a faith, it is impoſſible for Chriſtians to pleaſe God; for no other principle can conduct us to that holineſs which he approves. If we do not believe the truth of Chriſtianity, it is impoſſible that we ſhould take any pains to live like Chriſtians, or to walk in the ſteps of Chriſt Jeſus. It is impoſſible that we ſhould be animated with a glowing zeal to follow the example of his meekneſs, his humility, his forbearance, his long-ſuffering, his love unfeigned,—thoſe virtues, which are more peculiarly Chriſtian; and which never are and never can be, either much eſteemed or practiſed, but by thoſe, who place an unſhaken confidence in the promiſes of the goſpel. Men uſually live more and more for this world in proportion as they are convinced that there is no world beyond this; and they are leſs careful about their thoughts, words and actions in the ſame degree that they diſbelieve in a future judgement, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed. — Our belief, if it be a rational one, in the great points of chriſtian doctrine, muſt, undoubtedly, have a correſponding influence on our conduct. Our conduct will be the proof of the vitality of our faith; and our faith will thus excite a vigorous aſſurance, that our hopes are not illuſions and that the inviſible world is no fancied dream but an aweful reality. It was a faith, of this nature which made Noah prepare an ark againſt the threatened deluge.—It was ſuch a faith, which made Abraham leave his native country, to ſojourn, like a ſtranger and a pilgrim, in a

hand of promiſe. It was ſuch a faith, which made him obey God in all things, and even willing to ſpill the blood of his only child rather than incur the divine diſpleaſure. It was ſuch a faith, which inſpired and conſoled ſo many martyrs to the truth, though "deſtitute, afflicted, tormented;" but who looked to Jeſus, the author and finiſher of their faith, and truſted, without any inconſtancy of reſolution, in the truth of his promiſes. This was the faith of the Patriarchs,—of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, of the prophets and martyrs,—a faith, which wrought righteouſneſs and generated obedience. Their faith made them truſt in promiſes, of which they were not to live to ſee the accompliſhment. It made them, as it were, enjoy an inheritance which they did not poſſeſs, and hold faſt things which they did not ſee. Thus the faith of Abraham was accounted to him for righteouſneſs; not merely becauſe he confided in promiſes, which related to a diſtant and future time,—but, *becauſe he acted on that confidence, and becauſe his mind was no more doubtful of their completion, than if he had ſeen it come to paſs.* It was not merely his abſtract and ſpeculative faith, but it was that faith generating a lively and active obedience to the divine commands, which cauſed his juſtification.*

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* Thus St Paul and St James, who have been thought to entertain different opinions on juſtification, may be reconciled. St Paul attributes juſtification to faith producing obedience; (*Rom.* iv, 20—22) St James attributes it to obedience produced by faith. (*James* ii, 20—22.) The firſt aſcribes it to the cauſe, the laſt to the effect; the one to faith bearing fruit, the other to the fruit born by faith.

As Chriſtians, we are required to live by faith and not by ſight. We do not ſee the righteous in bliſs, or the wicked in torment; we do not ſee the crown of glory adorning the brow of the one, nor the conſuming fire devouring the other: but, nevertheleſs, our truſt in the ſure word of God, which cannot lie, will have the ſame influence on the true believer, as if heaven and hell were placed before his eyes.

In common life, our faith is ſeldom inactive; it uſually influences our conduct. Thus, for inſtance, if we firmly believe that any particular exertion, either of mind or body, will improve our fortune, we ſeldom fail to make the attempt. Our faith, in this inſtance, is of ſuch a nature, as to induce us to give an *active trial* to what we believe will be the means of our proſperity. Our faith in religion ought not, and, where it is ſincere, will not be torpid or inactive, any more than our faith in any of the common concerns of life. Religious belief, if it be inactive, if it do not ſhew it's practical efficacy in the conduct, is dead and good for nothing. If we poſſeſs a real, ſincere, undoubting conviction, or truſt that any particular courſe of medicine or diet will mend our health, we are never ſo much our own enemies as not to adopt it when it is in our power. If we confide in the ability or ſkill of any phyſician to ſave our lives, our confidence is always operative. It impels us, whenever it is poſſible, to ſolicit his advice, and to purſue the advice he gives. If we have a firm, undoubting, ſincere, rational and upright faith in the truth

of Chriſtianity, it will exert a palpable and viſible influence on our lives. It will be the evidence of it's own reality. If we ſincerely believe in Jeſus, our faith will not fail to ſhew itſelf in our obedience to his laws. If we really believe that he was ſent from heaven, as an inſtructor to mankind, that he roſe from the dead, and that he will, finally, come to judge the world in righteouſneſs, the reality of this conviction will be engraven on our outward conduct. Feeling a vigorous confidence in the hope that is ſet before us, we ſhall labour with ſerioufneſs to work out our own ſalvation. Thus *our faith in Chriſtianity can only be known, and it may always be clearly known by it's effects.* If it be ſuch a faith as improves the diſpoſition, makes the heart more tender, the thoughts more pure and the life more holy, it is a faith, genuine, unadulterated, ſincere;—but if it do not produce theſe effects, it is not the reality or the ſubſtance, but only the ſhadow and the fiction of belief. It is ſuch a belief as may be poſſeſſed by Devils as well as Chriſtians.

The active goodneſs of a man's life, is the only true teſt of his faith. A vigilant ſolicitude for the happineſs of his fellow creatures, an earneſt abhorrence of fraud, falſhood, cruelty, and inhumanity, will always characterize the ſincere believer in that religion, which ſums up all our duties in one comprehenſive maxim, which tells us to do unto others as we would that others ſhould do unto us.

A bad-living Chriſtian cannot be a ſincere believer.

That is, he cannot poſſeſs a firm, undoubting conviction in the truth of the religion which he profeſſes; for ſuch a conviction would as certainly deter him from iniquity, as a conviction that fire will burn, deters him from running his hand into the flame. Thus you ſee that the life is the only true teſt of a man's faith; and that he cannot be a ſincere believer whoſe life and conduct is one habitual violation of that religion which he profeſſes to believe.

Chriſtianity was not intended ſo much to dazzle by it's theoretical perfection, as to excite regard by it's practical uſefulneſs. It was not intended ſo much to amuſe the mind or gratify the curioſity, as to mend the heart; and the belief of it is no farther ſaving or praiſe-worthy, than as it conduces to the great end of making us forſake ſin and grow in holineſs. What doth it profit, ſaith St. James, if a man ſay he have faith and have not works; can faith ſave him? Faith, if it have not works, is dead. *James* ii, 14.

Any man may make a loud confeſſion of his faith, or empty proteſtations of his conviction; but this confeſſion and theſe proteſtations, which may be made by the ſinner as well as by the righteous, by the liar as well as by the lover of truth, by the rogue as well as by the honeſt man, can be nothing more than a vain jingle of words, where they are not aſſociated with ſubſtantial ſigns of real goodneſs.—As far as religious confeſſion goes without any practical proof of it's reality, there is no more merit in confeſſing the Chriſtian faith, than there would be in con-

feſſing the Mahometan or the Pagan. Indeed, to profeſs Chriſtianity and yet not to live as becomes Chriſtians, is only to increaſe our condemnation. It is only to exclaim, with pious hypocriſy, Lord, Lord!!! It is only to pay him a diſſembled adoration;—and, when that Lord ſhall come to judge the world, he will declare to *ſuch a worſhipper*,—I know thee not. Depart from me; thou profeſſor of faith, and thou worker of iniquity!!!

To profeſs to believe in the truth of the Chriſtian religion, is to profeſs to believe in a future judgment; and what does a future judgment imply, but a trial? And what can that trial, which we are then to undergo, be, but a trial of this,—whether our thoughts, words, acts, and the general tenor of our lives, have been conformable to the religion which we have profeſſed?

With what ſincerity can we profeſs the Chriſtian faith, if we live in a way of life, not only not ſuitable to it, but utterly repugnant to every law and precept it contains? Can we believe in Chriſt, without making him the pattern of our conduct? Can we believe that ſuch a perſon ever lived, that he atteſted the truth of his miſſion by mighty miracles, that he delivered thoſe rules of life which the Evangeliſts have recorded, that he denounced vengeance againſt the ſinner and promiſed happineſs to the righteous,—can we, I ſay, believe theſe things, and yet not follow his ſteps nor keep his ſayings? If, inſtead of following the bleſſed example of his holy life, we follow no example

but that of the profligate and the ſinner,—if, inſtead of obſerving his ſayings to do them, we ſtrive only to do deſpite unto them, can our profeſſion of his religion be ſincere, can our faith be genuine or can it ſave us? O Chriſtians, let us not truſt our ſafety to ſo frail a ſtay!!! That profeſſion of faith, which does not operate on the life and conduct, which does not improve the heart and diſpoſition, is only hypocriſy, and will end in our perdition.

The more ſincere and ſteadfaſt a man's faith is, the more holy will be his life; and it cannot be too often repeated, that no man's faith can be ſincere, unleſs it do influence his conduct. In whatever perſon there is a real and genuine perſuaſion that Chriſtianity is a certain truth, in the boſom of that perſon, morality will flourish; in his conduct, truth, integrity and humanity will prevail.

I do not, indeed, pretend to ſay, but that a man, who ſincerely believes in the truth of Chriſtianity, may, occaſionally, offend againſt it. He may, in ſome hour of infirmity, or in ſome violent and ſudden commotion of paſſion, be ſurpriſed in a fault; but no true believer ever was, or ever will be, an habitual tranſgreſſor. No true believer ever was notorious for any long continuance in impiety. No true believer ever was an habitual ſwearer, lyar, drunkard, or an habitual ſinner of any other deſcription. The true believer may fall, but his fall will be only for a moment. If he tranſgreſs, he will ſoon repent. He may turn from the Lord, for a ſhort ſeaſon; but it will

only be to turn to him again, with confuſion of face and bitterneſs of ſoul. In the ſcriptures, both of the old and new teſtament, we have inſtances of ſome variableneſs of character, even in the righteous. We behold David tranſgreſſing the divine commands; but, no ſooner tranſgreſſing, than he endeavours to waſh away his guilt in the contrition of his tears: and thoſe tears are not the hypocritical ſhow of remorſe, but the beginnings of practical amendment. The apoſtle Peter was certainly a perſon of very amiable character, and of the moſt upright intentions; yet, from ſometimes over-rating his ſtrength or under-rating his infirmities, he ruſhes into dangers which he has not ſufficient fortitude to encounter, and he braves temptations which he wants reſolution to overcome. But the warm-hearted and generous diſciple does not grow obdurate in guilt; he no ſooner ſins than he repents: and his repentance is not a tranſcient effervеſcence of compunction, but a laſting renewal of integrity. In a moment of inconſtancy, he once denies his maſter; but he confeſſes him all his life after.

If the good, the ſincere, the believing Chriſtian do ſometimes tranſgreſs, he will never perſiſt in tranſgreſſing. His iniquity will be tranſient, but his piety will be laſting. The ſuddenneſs of impulſe will be viſible in the one; the conſtancy of habit in the other. In his vices he may betray ſome wayward, fleeting and incidental propenſity to evil, but in his virtues he will diſcover a fixed inclination to good. Righteouſneſs will be his principle of action;—

and his occaſional miſ-doings will vaniſh in the general beauty and rectitude of his character. Some momentary aberrations to wrong are by no means incompatible with an habitual love of right. — A man may have a firm and rational conviction that drunkenneſs is ruinous to health, and that the pleaſure, which he will derive from it, will be greatly exceeded by the pain which will follow it's commiſſion; — and yet ſome ſocial infirmity may prevail, and he, who was exemplary for his temperance, may be a caſual ſinner againſt ſobriety. He who loves, reveres and practiſes truth, may, in ſome inauſpicious circumſtances, more perhaps from trembling irreſolution, than deliberate wickedneſs, aſſert that which is not, or deny that which is. But he, who has a fixed perſuaſion of the advantages of ſobriety, or of the ſanctity of truth, will never degrade himſelf by the beſtiality of a drunkard, or blaſt his reputation by the turpitude of a liar. — He who has a firm and ſtrongly impreſſed conviction, and, as it were, a preſiding ſacred conſciouſneſs of the truth, the importance, the duties and obligations of Chriſtianity, will nevertheleſs, perhaps be found, incidentally, to treſpaſs againſt it's laws. His faith may not, at all times, be ſo ſtrong as to preſerve him from falling. He may ſin againſt that which he knows to be juſt, and feels to be good. But his faith will preſerve him from frequent tranſgreſſions, and *from any one habitual ſin, which invariably denotes a radical depravity of heart.* If the ſincere believer do ever deviate, he will not long, nor often, deviate from the ſtrait line of duty, and he will atone for his occaſional offences,

not only by tears of anguiſh, but by acts of goodneſs. He will, ſeriouſly, endeavour to follow His ſteps, in whom was no ſin; and will not ſeek in an imaginary corruption of his nature, an apology for his wickedneſs, or a pretenſe for being wicked.

Pure, lively faith tends to bring the glories of heaven and the holineſs of God, in ſuch full and open proſpect before our eyes, that it must neceſſarily blunt the edge of our craving appetite for the periſhable things of this world; and it cannot but make us loath thoſe ſins, which we must be conſcious will make us loſe the love of Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.—And the more pure and lively, the more rational and conſiſtent, our faith becomes, the more it will generate the love of God, and the love of man within us; — till that love become ſo intenſe and warm, ſo rooted in our hearts, and ſo mingled in our frame, that we ſhall experience a pleaſure, "paſſing knowledge," in ſtriving to pleaſe God and to benefit mankind.— Thus the faith of the ſincere and rational believer, will be ſomething more than the idle whiſper of ſome fancied call*

* When ſome of the fanatics and viſionaries, here alluded to, perceive a flow of animal ſpirits or an excitement of the nerves at all ſtronger than uſual, they term it *a call*, or *an experience*; (meaning by theſe words, which are very uſual in the cant-jargon of fanaticiſm, an audible or palpable impreſſion of the Holy Ghoſt.) Of theſe *calls* and *experiences*, ſome of them keep a regular journal; and I believe that they all relate them to each other, at their weekly meetings. Such inſtances of ſelf-deluſion would afford a ſubject for pleaſantry, if they did not lead to ſuch pernicious and fatal conſequences. The morbid agency of ſuch deluſions generates a perverſeneſs

or the frothy effervescence of some transient feeling;—it will be his guide through life,—his bond of security in happiness and his stay of hope in misery;—a restraint from vice, and an incentive to virtue;—teaching him not to take up his rest, or to look for his reward here, but to turn his attention to that happier region, where all tears shall be wiped from all eyes, and the righteous shall shine, like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

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of mind and a hardness of heart, greater than can well be expressed: it fosters and invigorates every species of moral corruption; and the tragedy of superstition is often closed by some agonizing scene of insanity or murder.

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